

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Previously Presented): A method of facilitating a process performed by a semiconductor processing tool, comprising:

inputting process data relating to an actual process being performed by the semiconductor processing tool;

inputting a first principles physical model including a set of computer-encoded differential equations, the first principles physical model describing at least one of a basic physical or chemical attribute of the semiconductor processing tool;

performing first principles simulation for the actual process being performed during performance of the actual process using the physical model to provide a first principles simulation result in accordance with the process data relating to the actual process being performed in order to simulate the actual process being performed, said first principles simulation result being produced in a time frame shorter in time than the actual process being performed; and

using the first principles simulation result obtained during the performance of the actual process to facilitate the actual process being performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 2 (Previously Presented): The method of Claim 1, wherein said inputting process data comprises directly inputting the data relating to the actual process being performed by the semiconductor processing tool from at least one of a physical sensor and a metrology tool physically mounted on the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 3 (Previously Presented): The method of Claim 1, wherein said inputting process data comprises indirectly inputting the data relating to the actual process being performed by the semiconductor processing tool from at least one of a manual input device and a database.

Claim 4 (Original): The method of Claim 3, wherein said indirectly inputting comprises inputting data recorded from a process previously performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 5 (Original): The method of Claim 3, wherein said indirectly inputting comprises inputting data set by a simulation operator.

Claim 6 (Previously Presented): The method of Claim 1, wherein said inputting process data comprises inputting data relating to at least one of the physical characteristics of the semiconductor processing tool and the semiconductor tool environment.

Claim 7 (Previously Presented): The method of Claim 1, wherein said inputting process data comprises inputting data relating to at least one of a characteristic and a result of a process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 8 (Original): The method of Claim 1, wherein said inputting a first principles physical model comprises inputting a spatially resolved model of the geometry of the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 9 (Original): The method of Claim 1, wherein said inputting a first principles physical model comprises inputting fundamental equations necessary to perform first principles simulation for a desired simulation result.

Claim 10 (Original): The method of Claim 1, wherein said performing first principles simulation comprises performing first principles simulation concurrently with the process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 11 (Original): The method of Claim 1, further comprising performing first principles simulation not concurrently with the process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 12 (Original): The method of Claim 1, wherein said performing first principles simulation comprises using the input data to set a boundary condition of the first principles simulation model.

Claim 13 (Original): The method of Claim 1, wherein said performing first principles simulation comprises using the input data to set an initial condition of the first principles simulation model.

Claim 14 (Previously Presented): The method of Claim 1, further comprising using a network of interconnected resources inside a semiconductor device manufacturing facility to perform the first principles simulation recited in Claim 1.

Claim 15 (Original): The method of Claim 14, further comprising using code parallelization among interconnected computational resources to share the computational load of the first principles simulation.

Claim 16 (Original): The method of Claim 14, further comprising sharing simulation information among interconnected resources to facilitate a process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 17 (Original): The method of Claim 16, wherein said sharing simulation information comprises distributing simulation results among the interconnected resources to reduce redundant execution of substantially similar first principles simulations by different resources.

Claim 18 (Original): The method of Claim 16, wherein said sharing simulation information comprises distributing model changes among the interconnected resources to reduce redundant refinements of first principles simulations by different resources.

Claim 19 (Previously Presented): The method of Claim 1, further comprising using remote resources via a wide area network to facilitate the semiconductor process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 20 (Original): The method of Claim 19, wherein said using remote resources comprises using at least one of remote computational and storage resources via a wide area network to facilitate the semiconductor process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 21 (Previously Presented): A system comprising:

- a semiconductor processing tool configured to perform a process;
- an input device configured to input data relating to an actual process being performed by the semiconductor processing tool; and
- a first principles simulation processor configured to:
 - input a first principles physical model including a set of computer-encoded differential equations describing at least one of a basic physical or chemical attribute of the semiconductor processing tool, and
 - perform first principles simulation for the actual process being performed during performance of the actual process using the physical model to provide a first principles simulation result in accordance with the process data relating to the actual process being performed in order to simulate the actual process being performed, said first principles simulation result being produced in a time frame shorter in time than the actual process being performed, wherein said first principles simulation result obtained during the performance of the actual process is used to facilitate the actual process being performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 22 (Original): The system of Claim 21, wherein said input device comprises at least one of a physical sensor and a metrology tool physically mounted on the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 23 (Original): The system of Claim 21, wherein said input device comprises at least one of a manual input device and a database.

Claim 24 (Original): The system of Claim 23, wherein said input device is configured to input data recorded from a process previously performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 25 (Original): The system of Claim 23, wherein said input device is configured to input data set by a simulation operator.

Claim 26 (Original): The system of Claim 21, wherein said input device is configured to input data relating to at least one of the physical characteristics of the semiconductor processing tool and the semiconductor tool environment.

Claim 27 (Original): The system of Claim 21, wherein said input device is configured to input data relating to at least one of a characteristic and a result of a process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 28 (Original): The system of Claim 21, wherein said processor is configured to input a first principles physical model comprising a spatially resolved model of the geometry of the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 29 (Original): The system of Claim 21, wherein said processor is configured to input a first principles physical model comprising fundamental equations necessary to perform first principles simulation for a desired simulation result.

Claim 30 (Original): The system of Claim 21, wherein said processor is configured to perform said first principles simulation concurrently with the process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 31 (Original): The system of Claim 21, wherein said processor is configured to perform said first principles simulation not concurrently with the process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 32 (Original): The system of Claim 21, wherein said processor is configured to perform said first principles simulation at least by using the input data to set a boundary condition of the first principles simulation model.

Claim 33 (Original): The system of Claim 21, wherein said processor is configured to perform said first principles simulation at least by using the input data to set an initial condition of the first principles simulation model.

Claim 34 (Previously Presented): The system of Claim 21, further comprising a network of interconnected resources inside a semiconductor device manufacturing facility and connected to said processor and configured to assist said processor in performing at least one of the inputting a first principles simulation model and performing a first principles simulation.

Claim 35 (Original): The system of Claim 34, wherein said network of interconnected resources is configured to use code parallelization with said processor to share the computational load of the first principles simulation.

Claim 36 (Original): The system of Claim 34, wherein said network of interconnected resources is configured to share simulation information with said processor to facilitate said process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 37 (Original): The system of Claim 36, wherein said network of interconnected resources is configured to distribute simulation results to said processor to reduce redundant execution of substantially similar first principles simulations.

Claim 38 (Original): The system of Claim 36, wherein said network of interconnected resources is configured to distribute model changes to said processor to reduce redundant refinements of first principles simulations.

Claim 39 (Previously Presented): The system of Claim 21, further comprising remote resources connected to said processor via a wide area network and configured to facilitate the semiconductor process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 40 (Original): The system of Claim 39, wherein said remote resources comprise at least one of a computational and a storage resource.

Claims 41-43. (Canceled)

Claim 44 (Previously Presented): At least one of non-volatile media and volatile media containing program instructions for execution on a processor, which when executed by the computer system, cause the processor to perform the steps of:

inputting process data relating to an actual process being performed by the semiconductor processing tool;

inputting a first principles physical model including a set of computer-encoded differential equations, the first principles physical model describing at least one of a basic physical or chemical attribute of the semiconductor processing tool;

performing first principles simulation for the actual process being performed during performance of the actual process using the physical model to provide a first principles simulation result in accordance with the process data relating to the actual process being performed in order to simulate the actual process being performed, said first principles simulation result being produced in a time frame shorter in time than the actual process being performed; and

using the first principles simulation result obtained during the performance of the actual process to facilitate the actual process being performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 45 (Previously Presented): The method of Claim 1, wherein said performing a first principles simulation comprises:

providing for the first principles simulation a reuse of known solutions as initial conditions for the first principles simulation.

Claim 46 (Previously Presented): The system of Claim 21, wherein the first principles simulator is configured to provide for the first principles simulation a reuse of known solutions as initial conditions for the first principles simulation.

Claim 47. (Canceled)